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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 24 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

Contents

Agenda item 108: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

Agenda item 110: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*)

Agenda item 111: International drug control (*continued*)

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

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01-59925 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 108: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.8/Rev.1, A/C.3/56/L.10/Rev.1, A/C.3/56/L.12/Rev.1*)

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.8/Rev.1: Cooperatives in social development

1. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.8/Rev.1 had no programme budget implications.

2. **Ms. Enhsetsel** (Mongolia) said that Guinea, Myanmar and the Sudan had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution and announced two revisions to the text. In paragraph 2, the words "revised draft guidelines" should be replaced by "revised guidelines". In paragraph 6, the word "*Further*" should be inserted before the word "*Invites*".

3. **The Chairman** announced that Guatemala, Haiti, Kenya, Mali, the Niger and Sierra Leone had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution.

4. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.8/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted without a vote.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.10/Rev.1: A United Nations literacy decade: education for all

5. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.10/Rev.1 had no programme budget implications.

6. **Ms. Enhsetsel** (Mongolia) announced that Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Monaco, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Sri Lanka had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution, and that the Sudan should have been listed among the original sponsors of the revised draft resolution.

7. Some revisions had been made in the draft resolution. In paragraph 4, the words "education for all" should be deleted after the word "national". In paragraph 8, the words "and those of the United Nations Literacy Decade" should be added after the words "the goals of education for all". In the English version of paragraph 9, the words "promote literacy made in recent major United Nations conferences" should read "promote literacy made at recent major United Nations conferences". At the end of paragraph 10, the following words should be added: "in a manner that is complementary to and coordinated with the ongoing education for all process".

8. **The Chairman** announced that Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Fiji, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Mauritania, the Niger, Sierra Leone, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zambia had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution.

9. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.10/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted without a vote.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.12/Rev.1: Policies and programmes involving youth*

10. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.12/Rev.1* had no programme budget implications.

11. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) read out the oral correction made to the revised draft resolution when it was introduced.

12. **Ms. Carvalho** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, said that the words ", concerning the fourth session of the World Youth Forum" should be added after the symbol A/C.3/56/2, in the footnote on page 3. She also announced that Brazil, Cuba, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Fiji and Mozambique had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution.

13. **The Chairman** announced that Armenia, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Haiti, Israel, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, the Niger, Nigeria, Solomon Islands, Swaziland and Trinidad and Tobago had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution.

14. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.12/Rev.1*, as orally revised, was adopted without a vote.*

15. **The Chairman** announced that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 108.

Agenda item 110: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.4, A/C.3/56/L.5, A/C.3/56/L.16)

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.4: Role, function, periodicity and duration of the United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders

16. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.4 had no programme budget implications.

17. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.4 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.5: Action against transnational organized crime: assistance to States in capacity-building with a view to facilitating the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the adopted protocols thereto

18. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.5 had no programme budget implications.

19. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.5 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.16: United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

20. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.16 had no programme budget implications.

21. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) read out the oral correction made to the draft resolution when it was introduced.

22. **The Chairman** recalled that, when the draft resolution had been introduced, it had been announced that Suriname was one of the sponsors.

23. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.16, as revised, was adopted without a vote.*

Agenda item 111: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.18)

Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.18: International cooperation against the world drug problem

24. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolutionA/C.3/56/L.18 had no programme budget implications.

25. **Ms. Lajous** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, said that Antigua and Barbuda and Cambodia had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

26. **The Chairman** announced that Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Nepal, New Zealand, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Swaziland and the United States of America had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

27. *Draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.18 was adopted.*

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of the child (*continued*) (A/56/203, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/342-S/2001/852, A/56/453, A/56/488)

28. **Mr. Mainali** (Nepal) said that the peace and prosperity of the world of tomorrow largely depended on whether today's children were raised in a healthy family environment assuring their survival and their mental and physical development. However, unfortunately, millions of children suffered from discrimination, hunger and malnutrition, illiteracy and ignorance. In many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, infant and maternal mortality rates were very high; there was discrimination against girls as regards access to food, education, health and work opportunities and female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, genital mutilation and child marriage were practised; many other children were killed or tortured in conflict situations and suffered physical and psychological trauma; many others became refugees because of war, conflicts and violence in their countries of origin. It was the obligation of Governments and the international community to address those problems effectively.

29. The World Summit for Children had created worldwide awareness of the plight of millions of children. Similarly, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had served to promote the

interests of children and, thanks to its almost universal ratification, the protection of the rights of children was considered as a priority issue in the global political agenda. The Convention had also resulted in widespread recognition of children's fundamental right to develop physically, mentally and socially to their fullest potential and to participate in decisions affecting their future. During the past decade, much progress had been made in ensuring such protection at both international and national levels, thanks to the adoption of two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. All those developments had produced concrete changes in law, policy and practice, and to some extent in child education and health services, in many countries. UNICEF had done a great deal to promote the noble cause of children's welfare throughout the world over the last 50 years. Commendable efforts had also been made by the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to safeguard the rights of children, and the measures adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to implement the Convention were also praiseworthy.

30. His Government was deeply concerned at the increasing number of children involved in armed conflicts, or affected directly or indirectly by them. Nepal had a legal provision that prohibited young people under 18 years of age from serving in combat as soldiers or police officers. Since more than half the population of Nepal was below the age of 18, the Government attached great importance to the protection of the rights of the child, and had been one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government had also signed the two optional protocols to the Convention, and had taken legislative and other measures to promote the rights of the child. The Children's Act and the Labour Act, which incorporated the fundamental principles of the Convention, gave priority to the education of children, child health care and mother and child health care. Measures had also been taken to eliminate discrimination against girls through education, literacy programmes and dissemination of information. Free education up to the secondary level had been established. Nepal had strict laws prohibiting children under 14 years of age from working, and was encouraged by the adoption of the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

31. Despite national efforts to protect the rights of children and promote their development, children still suffered from malnutrition, illiteracy and socio-economic problems. The majority of the rural population in the country remained poor, children were deprived of the opportunity for primary education, and a sizeable number died of preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and measles. Infant and child death rates were still very high. Accordingly, the Government had formulated specific policies and programmes in the current five-year plan for the promotion and protection of the rights of children, in particular for the development of handicapped children, street children and children in difficult circumstances. Efforts were also under way to implement a mandatory education programme, and non-governmental organizations and civil society were being encouraged to launch awareness campaigns to disseminate information on laws relating to children.

32. **Mr. Saram** (Sri Lanka) said that although the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Sri Lanka was party, was necessary, it could not cover all that society, the community, the family and parents should do, or all that should be done nationally and internationally to protect children. There was a need for a broader perspective that would embrace every aspect of human existence: cultural and economic, social and political, material and spiritual. His delegation supported the programmes for children that had been developed over the years under United Nations auspices and trusted that the special session of the General Assembly on children would draw attention to the depressing conditions in which millions of the world's children survived.

33. The children of Sri Lanka were subjected to unusually heavy pressures, not only as a result of the uncertainties that lay heavily on the young, particularly in developing countries, but also owing to a merciless armed rebellion waged by a tiny group in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious population of the country. The terrorist activities of that small group had reached an extraordinary level owing to the massive flows of funds from countries with which, ironically, Sri Lanka had friendly relations. The armed conflict had disrupted the country's capacity to provide its people and children with adequate services. In that connection he wished to clarify an erroneous reference to Sri

Lanka in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/56/342). Paragraph 13 of the report implied that government forces targeted children. He wished to make it abundantly clear that the Government had never targeted children in the unfortunate internal armed conflict that had plagued the country for so long. On the contrary, government forces had always sought to avoid civilian casualties and, on numerous occasions, had refrained from conducting operations because of such possible casualties. It was a matter of great seriousness on which he would communicate further with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. What was certain was that children in Sri Lanka within the area of armed conflict were recruited by the rebel group and used as suicide bombers.

34. On other matters, Sri Lanka had made considerable progress towards the goals set out in the Declaration of the 1990 World Summit on Children: control of childhood diseases had improved, thereby significantly reducing infant and child mortality; a 90 per cent literacy rate for boys and girls had been achieved; the maternal mortality rate had fallen; no cases of poliomyelitis had been recorded since 1990; over 95 per cent of children were enrolled in and completed primary school; and over 80 per cent used iodized salt. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka, in common with many developing countries, had enormous difficulties of poverty and underdevelopment. Overcoming those problems would require broader international economic cooperation, improved terms of trade and easier access to technological and medical advances. Those were essential preconditions for the improvement of the situation of children, as were efforts to combat malnutrition, the eradication of malaria, reduced school drop-out rates and higher quality education. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, the incidence of which was still low, might pose a new threat.

35. His Government remained committed to the welfare of its children and was grateful for the cooperation of the international community, the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as of other government and non-governmental entities.

36. **Mr. Al Dehaimi** (Qatar) said that in recent years great progress had been made in promoting the rights of the child and protecting children against diseases but, unfortunately, violence and war now had more lethal effects. Children were suffering in many parts of the world, particularly as a result of armed conflict, which killed, injured, disabled and displaced thousands of them, and civil wars in which child soldiers were increasingly being used. Such wars displaced children, who were deprived of housing and medical care, and exposed them, above all girl children, to dangers such as sexual exploitation, rape and HIV/AIDS. The international community should strengthen the protection of this vulnerable sector of the population at both the regional and the international level.

37. The Government of Qatar was convinced of the importance of protecting children and promoting their legitimate right to life. Accordingly, it had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and ratified it in 1995; it was now trying to achieve the goals established therein. It was essential to establish an information network that provided indicators which could be used to remove the obstacles that stood in the way of protecting the rights of the child in each country. The Government of Qatar was also collaborating with the United Nations and the specialized agencies to provide technical assistance and had enacted laws and established mechanisms to enable the pertinent bodies to achieve those goals. Regarding education, the Constitution of Qatar stipulated that children should receive all levels of education and, since 2001, primary education had been obligatory and free for all the country's children without distinction. Indeed, fines were imposed on parents or guardians who failed to enrol children in school, in accordance with the provisions of article 28 of the Convention. Medical care was also universal and free.

38. With regard to acts of violence against children, Sheikha Mooza bint Nasin Al-Musanad, wife of His Highness, the Emir, and President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, had established directives for the establishment of a body specifically responsible for dealing with such acts. Also, with the Minister of the Interior, a telephone service, "The friend of the children", had been set up, which children and youth could call to denounce any act of violence committed against them.

39. Qatar had joined the global campaign organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "We, the Children", in which several governmental agencies had participated. More than six million persons had taken part in this campaign under the leadership of His Excellency, the Emir. Qatar was doing everything necessary to ensure that its children

became productive individuals in every sphere. The Head of the Department for Children had been appointed a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which reflected the country's interest in that area.

40. Lastly, his delegation wished to express its concern for the Palestinian children who were dying as a result of Israeli repression. Israel's actions were a cause for great concern, because, as had been observed, Israel was taking advantage of the current international situation to carry out raids in the occupied Palestinian territories, kill civilians and paralyse local services in the villages, leaving children orphaned, disrupting school classes and causing turmoil among whole sectors of the population. It was a war on all fronts against the Palestinians, which stripped children of their most basic rights. The Organization of the Islamic Conference had requested the Security Council to hold an urgent meeting to ensure that the Government of Israel ended its repression of the Palestinians and withdrew from the territories under Palestinian jurisdiction.

41. He also wished to refer to the conditions endured by Iraqi children since an embargo had been imposed on the country in 1990, hindering progress in education and health-care programmes and causing millions of victims. Several UNICEF studies confirmed that many children were undernourished and ill.

42. His delegation urged countries to adopt measures to come to the aid of the Afghan people before winter arrived, bearing in mind the conditions of poverty, illness, hunger and illiteracy that they were experiencing. If the war was not ended rapidly, the displacement of millions of persons would end in tragedy.

43. **Ms. Jackden** (Nigeria) said that Nigeria had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was fully committed to the principles established therein. As a demonstration of its commitment, Nigeria had also signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention and the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court.

44. Human rights issues, particularly the rights of women and children had always been at the forefront of the Nigerian Government's national concerns. In that regard, it was strengthening institutional mechanisms such as the National Human Rights Commission and the National Child Rights Implementation Monitoring Committee. In addition, programmes such as the national poverty eradication programme, the universal basic education programme and the national programme on immunization, all aimed at improving the quality of children's lives, were being vigorously pursued.

45. More than 10 years after the World Summit for Children and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and despite the progress made in their implementation, children's lives in developing countries, in particular in Africa, continued to remain in jeopardy as a result of poverty, the heavy debt burden, malnutrition, poor sanitation, inadequate health care, HIV/AIDS and armed conflicts. Those factors had combined to deprive children of the security, health and education that they needed to grow into productive citizens.

46. Her Government was deeply concerned that Africa continued to be plagued by war and armed conflict, which had an enormous and disproportionate negative impact on the civilian population, especially women and children. Entire generations had known only brutal armed conflict and insecurity. Millions of children had been left disabled and psychologically scarred by traumatic experiences; the protection of children in situations of armed conflict was therefore an imperative. In that regard her delegation fully supported United Nations efforts to promote the demobilization, rehabilitation and social integration of combatants under the age of 18. Her Government also called for the strengthening of efforts to find lasting solutions to conflicts, particularly in Africa. The search for solutions must seek to address the root causes of those conflicts, such as pervasive poverty and inequalities in income and economic growth between and within countries. The resources used for the prosecution of wars and the manufacture of instruments of war should be channelled towards the provision of social services, which would, in turn, impact positively on children. Furthermore, her delegation hoped that the current efforts being made to protect children during and after armed conflict would spur Governments to take measures to bring to justice the authors of acts of violence against children.

47. Armed conflict facilitated the spread and aggravated the impact of HIV/AIDS, partly due to the violence, including rape, perpetrated by members of the armed forces against women and children. There was therefore a need to increase awareness among

parties to conflicts of the spread and devastating effect of HIV/AIDS. Her Government supported the idea of providing training on HIV/AIDS prevention for troops deployed in peacekeeping operations.

48. Trafficking in human beings, particularly women and children, had taken on alarming proportions, especially in Africa. The reports circulated at the current session revealed that armed conflict often led to the abduction and recruitment of children for use as soldiers, prostitutes and slaves. In Africa considerable efforts were being made at the regional and subregional levels to address that issue. In that regard her delegation called on the international community to provide the technical support and resources necessary to enable regional organizations to curb trafficking in women and children and their exploitation in situations of armed conflict.

49. She urged Member States to ensure that a strong outcome document emerged from the rescheduled special session on children, and that it adequately reflected the special needs of African children. In that regard she hoped that the international community would live up to its earlier commitments and provide new and additional resources in view of the deteriorating conditions of children in Africa.

50. **Mr. Laurin** (Canada) said that his Government would continue to work to ensure that the special session resulted in meaningful commitments, time-bound goals and specific strategies to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to improve the lives of all the world's children. His Government had emphasized the importance of a rights-based approach as the best way of addressing the challenges facing children, and was committed to an outcome founded on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ensuring that the rights of every girl and boy, including adolescents, were respected without discrimination.

51. It was very important not to go backwards from previously agreed international commitments on human rights and humanitarian law. The special session on children was not the place to weaken commitments to children; his Government had striven to ensure that the final declaration and plan of action addressed the situation of children around the world who suffered violations of their human rights and were in need of special protection.

52. While much progress had been made over the past decade, much remained to be done, and new challenges had now emerged, in particular HIV/AIDS, which threatened an entire generation of children, many of whom had been born with HIV. Concern for the health of children was a universal value.

53. His Government remained firm in the conviction that children had the right to participate in discussions and decisions about their lives, which was why it had worked to ensure the participation of children in the preparatory process and in the special session itself. His Government pledged to work as hard as necessary to contribute to a positive outcome. His delegation also supported the proposal for the adoption of a procedural resolution on the rights of the child reaffirming the commitment of the international community to implement the Convention and do everything possible to achieve a successful special session so as not to prejudge the negotiations on the outcome document.

54. Canada strongly supported UNICEF and other United Nations agencies in their endeavours to ensure that all children received the best possible start in life and that their rights were integrated into all relevant United Nations programmes. His Government supported UNICEF's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to children in complex emergencies and to implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for child soldiers and programmes for abducted children who had been released. In that regard he stressed the importance of ensuring access to humanitarian assistance and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. He also welcomed UNICEF's work on small arms and children and looked forward to the upcoming launch of Graça Machel's book "The Impact of War on Children".

55. His delegation welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and expressed its appreciation for his efforts to integrate the concerns of children in peace processes and incorporate child protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions. His delegation was encouraged by the commitments obtained by the Special Representative from parties to armed conflicts, but stressed the importance of monitoring their implementation.

56. Armed conflict was a matter of international peace and security, and thus fell clearly within the Security Council's mandate. In that regard Canada

fully supported the active involvement of the Security Council in that issue and the implementation of its resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000), and urged the Council to adopt a strong resolution at the upcoming open debate.

57. In conclusion, Canada looked forward to participating in the upcoming Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held in Yokohama in December 2001, and welcomed the active involvement of children and young people in the Congress.

58. **Ms. Korneliouk** (Belarus) said that one of the indisputable achievements of the World Summit for Children had been the increased attention focused on young people's issues in national and global policies. The steps Belarus had taken in the field were a case in point: in 1995, a national plan of action for the period 1997-2000 had been adopted to protect the rights of the child, under which 27 laws and regulations on behalf of children had been promulgated, reflecting the public policy principles given priority, which could be summed up as "seeking the best for children". In 1998, Belarus had adopted the presidential programmes currently under way, "The children of Chernobyl", "Children with disabilities", "Working children" and "Establishing social services for the family and the child". Steps were currently being taken to improve the presentation of statistical reports on child-related questions, and to help non-governmental and other organizations function more effectively.

59. Belarus was unreservedly in favour of having young people take part in the debates on matters that concerned them. Belarus's youth representative, who would participate in the special session of the General Assembly on children, was also scheduled to take part in the World Youth Forum.

60. Belarus was prepared to adopt the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had formally acceded to the Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. On 25 October, the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly would take up the draft laws ratifying them, and her delegation hoped very much to be in a position to inform the Committee before it concluded its work that Belarus had taken action on those questions.

61. Regarding preparations for the special session, in April 2001 a conference had been held in Minsk under the chairmanship of Belarus, attended by representatives of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), of its member States and of children from those States, and it had been the culmination of 10 years of major efforts and action on behalf of children. During the conference, the participants had been able to exchange information on national and regional priorities in the various CIS member States and on the promotion and protection of children in the coming decade. It had adopted a document defining the areas of activity on behalf of children that were to be given priority, taken a decision to strengthen the legal protection of minors and to formulate legislation governing minors, made provision to support and encourage the family as the natural environment within which children should mature, risk-free maternity, the protection of child and adolescent health, more balanced child nutrition, guaranteed access to education, support services for children in particularly difficult circumstances and early childhood development up to the age of five.

62. Belarus commended UNICEF activities and especially appreciated the specific energetic steps taken by the funding agency in Minsk.

63. Her Government was convinced that concerted, concrete action by all Governments, international bodies and political organizations would produce measures tailored to the problems that required systemic and comprehensive approaches. That was the key for the future of children and, ultimately, for the future of the world.

64. **Mr. Gabay** (Israel) said that the future of humanity lay in the education of the current generation of children, which would enable them to advance the quality of life, social justice and progress in their societies. Although his delegation was well aware of the evils suffered by millions of children in the world, it preferred to limit its remarks to education, instruction and culture, the basis of dialogue between different communities. All had a primordial and immediate duty to improve the education and instruction of children and adolescents by giving priority to developing countries, and especially the least developed. International networks should be developed for distance education, with interactive twinning between schools, universities and technological institutes in wealthy countries with those

in poor nations. Primary and secondary schools as well as universities in the industrialized nations should establish permanent material and pedagogical assistance for similar institutions in developing countries.

65. The problems of underdevelopment and of economic and social inequality should be taught as a separate subject in wealthy countries, starting in primary school. Children and young people should learn about the deplorable living conditions so prevalent in the poorest countries, and learn that in the long run the poverty of some endangered the prosperity of others.

66. Economic globalization was not necessarily bad, but it would need to be accompanied by universal social development. The world of the day did not belong only to countries with natural wealth but also to those with human resources, who drew rich information from their computers in order to transform it into goods and services. Information and know-how needed to circulate towards the countries of the South by all the means that progress offered: satellites, cables, computers, high-tech telecommunications and the like. Every classroom should be equipped with a computer, each child should know how to use the Internet, and each school should be linked by satellite to a distance-education network led by educational experts and specialized teachers. Although the cost of such a project might be difficult to calculate, there was no question that it was less than the price of an armed confrontation.

67. The world had become vulnerable, as had been demonstrated by the cataclysm of 11 September, which all, or nearly all humanity mourned. "Nearly all", because that humanity included the authors of the massacre, the initiators, the financiers, those who protected them and offered them refuge, those who celebrated the calamity joyfully or in silence. All of them had been children who had not grown up in democratic countries, who had not enjoyed civil rights and who had not had an adequate education. On the contrary, they had been subjugated and used as instruments by ideologies based on religious fanaticism that made a cult of hatred and used terror as a political weapon to serve a justice that was said to be transcendent.

68. It was deplorable that, during the past decade, so many millions of children had been victims of some 150 armed conflicts and that hundreds of thousands of them had been recruited as soldiers by promises or brainwashing. In that context, Israel was pleased to confirm that it was willing to ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as soon as possible, particularly the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

69. Some speakers had accused Israel of taking advantage of the current international situation to increase the suffering of Palestinian women and children. While it sincerely regretted the living conditions of those women and children, his delegation recommended seeking the causes of their suffering in the lamentable policies of their leaders: in the systematic and institutionalized teaching of hatred and contempt for Jews and Israelis in the schools; in the incitement to violence in the sermons of the muftis in the mosques; in slanderous and inflamed messages by the Palestinian media and the violent manifestations of Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in the streets of Gaza and Ramallah; and in the cynical use of children in violent confrontations. Terrorism was the main reason for the suffering endured by the Palestinian women, children and people. Terrorism, regardless of its motivation, was the number one enemy of the dialogue for peace and the greatest obstacle to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, including the right to life.

70. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) endorsed the views expressed on the item by the delegations of Chile, on behalf of the Rio Group, and Uruguay, on behalf of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile.

71. The tragic events of 11 September had affected the international endeavour to achieve a better, more just and safe environment for the children and adolescents of the world. The interruption of the negotiations leading to the adoption of a political declaration and plan of action on children had delayed the national and international activities that should have resulted from the special session on children. It was important, however, to seize the opportunity afforded by that interlude in order to reflect on the most effective way to ensure that the outcome of the special session, when it was held, would truly lead to the full realization of the rights of the child and the adolescent.

72. The eradication of poverty, the fostering of stable, safe and just societies for all and the full

implementation of all the human rights of women and girls, including their reproductive rights, were the pillars upon which "a world fit for children" should be constructed. His delegation was confident that the final outcome document of the forthcoming special session would recognize and reinforce the achievements of previous conferences for the benefit of adolescents and the advancement of women and girls, in particular.

73. His delegation once again reaffirmed Brazil's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which continued to be a source of inspiration for legislators and policy makers. Even though Brazil had yet to overcome some of the biggest obstacles to the full realization of the rights of children and adolescents, the Government had been striving to provide durable solutions to the structural imbalances and to assist the more vulnerable segments of the population.

74. Early in 2001, the Federal Government had announced its decision to expand to the entire country the school grant initiative which provided financial assistance to low-income families. Already, more than 2.5 million children had been helped since February 2001 and it was hoped that the initiative would reach 11 million children in the near future; that corresponded to almost one third of Brazil's school-age population. It was estimated that the programme would produce an average increase of 15 to 20 per cent in the income of beneficiary families. Priority was given to those States which had the lowest human development indexes, and the money was channelled directly to the mothers of the children who benefited from the initiative, since the programme was designed to enable them to withdraw the grant from the bank without intermediaries. Even though the principal goal was to keep children in school, the programme had the additional positive effects of empowering women and combating social exclusion. Municipalities were also required to supervise the implementation of the programme and promote after-school activities through municipal councils made up of equal numbers of local community members and administrative officials.

75. That initiative was an example of what President Cardoso called the "silent revolution", which was designed to achieve universal primary education and implement effective social development projects. A similar initiative had been launched the previous month, the "nutrition grant", offering low-income mothers an identical stipend for every child up to six years of age. The grant would initially benefit 2.7 million children and 800,000 expectant mothers, with a view to providing better nutrition.

76. In the area of health, significant progress had been achieved during the previous decade in preventing child and infant mortality and deaths linked to diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and preventable diseases. Brazil had been able to meet many of the goals set at the World Summit for Children. It was particularly proud of the sound results achieved by its breastfeeding programme, which now covered 69 per cent of infants below six months of age, as opposed to 22 per cent in 1975. Brazil had 184 hospitals certified as "child-friendly" by UNICEF. Thanks to a network of 136 human milk banks, more than 300,000 infants had been fed in the previous three years. Those were only a few examples of what Brazil had been doing for children and adolescents. Nevertheless, much remained to be done and the best interests of the child would always be paramount.

77. **Mr. Kamara** (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

78. Sierra Leone was beginning to recover from a period of 10 years of devastating war which had directly affected millions of children, many of whom had been exploited in the service of the various armed factions, while millions of others had been displaced. Sierra Leone shared the concern expressed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regarding the omission of concerns specific to girl children from much of the recent documentation and urged that greater international consideration should be given to the predicament of girls in the ongoing peace process in Sierra Leone. During the war, young girls had been repeatedly subjected to sexual abuse and enslavement; at present many of them had no families to return to and feared rejection by their communities, while some were forced into prostitution for want of alternative means of subsistence.

79. In collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, the Sierra Leone Government was attempting to identify displaced children and ensure that they received assistance and protection. The overwhelming majority

of internally displaced children did not benefit from the protection extended under international law which put them much more at risk. At present, the assistance offered them included foster care until such time as they could be reunited with their families, or indefinitely, if that was not possible. Psychological care, medical services and educational assistance were also offered.

80. The Sierra Leone Government appreciated the need to establish new norms for the treatment of children and, to that end, had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and was in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In line with the appeal made by the Secretary-General the previous year and the Lomé Convention, Parliament had already enacted legislation setting the minimum age for voluntary enlistment in the army at 18. It had also established a National Commission for War Affected Children, which examined the concerns of such children in a comprehensive fashion.

81. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) had child protection advisers among its personnel, which ensured the promotion of children's concerns, while measures had been taken to ensure that those concerns were central to the work of the justice mechanisms soon to be established in Sierra Leone.

82. The initiatives taken to end the impunity of those who committed offences in Sierra Leone would benefit all of society, but children in particular. However, if the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the special court were to function effectively, adequate resources must be provided.

83. His delegation urged the Committee seriously to consider the way in which conflicts and children's involvement in them were addressed in developing countries. Demobilization packages and post-conflict judicial mechanisms were essential, but without the basic means of subsistence and educational opportunities many children would choose to involve themselves in armed conflicts. They had almost no other option, and no innovative post-conflict mechanism would change that situation.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.